

Written Testimony of Representative Cheri Bustos (IL-17)
Make It in America: What's Next?
PANEL 3: The Future of Manufacturing

I want to first thank you, Congressman Hoyer, for organizing today's hearing and for leading the way on the "Make it in America" initiative.

And thank you to all my colleagues here today for your commitment to fighting for American workers and manufacturing.

Revitalizing American manufacturing has been my top priority since coming to Congress in 2013.

In my region in Northwest and Central Illinois, we have a strong and deep manufacturing tradition and the potential to be, what I call, a real "Manufacturing Triangle."

Between John Deere in the Quad-Cities, Caterpillar in Peoria, aerospace companies in Rockford, and the dozens of other manufacturers in communities large and small in between, we have a workforce and manufacturing base second to none.

Yet we still struggle with many of the same problems faced by communities across the country:

- A mismatch between the skills that workers have and the skills employers need.
- Entrepreneurs who find it difficult to secure the capital needed to take their ideas to the next level.
- And hard working families playing by the rules who feel the American dream slipping farther from their reach.

In 2013, I joined with the University of Illinois to launch "Partnering for Illinois' Economic Future," and we've been partners in economic development since.

One of our most important successes we had was to bring the new Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute to Illinois.

I had the opportunity to make a personal pitch to President Obama that his home state of Illinois would be the perfect place for this first-of-its-kind Digital Lab.

Illinois, and our region in particular, are perfectly suited for this investment to drive the renaissance of American manufacturing.

This Digital Lab for manufacturing will help our region, state and country achieve our full economic potential and be home to even more of the good-paying and innovative manufacturing and research jobs of the future.

The Manufacturing Lab's research work will help develop innovative solutions that transform defense and civilian manufacturing and create jobs.

Because many of these jobs will require new and advanced skills, the Digital Lab will also partner with educational institutions, trade organizations, and local economic development organizations on workforce development.

This sort of initiative is only possible with a tremendous amount of collaboration and cooperation.

No one agency, industry or sector can do this work alone.

It's a true Public-Private partnership.

I have long believed collaboration across sectors, whether formal or informal, is one of the keys to building a strong economic future.

That's why I've hosted regional meetings and economic summits in Illinois to bring together stake holders to discuss the challenges and opportunities we have and what we need to do to improve our region's economy and competitiveness.

Because if you want to achieve big things, you have to work together.

It is my hope that we can bring the collaborative approach I've pursued in Illinois to the national level.

I'm currently working to draft legislation that would direct the President to develop a national manufacturing strategy that would identify sectors and emerging technologies in which American manufacturing can grow and be most competitive internationally.

The bill is aimed at spurring job growth, making American manufacturing more competitive, and rebuilding the manufacturing sector—all of which are critical to continuing our nation's economic recovery.

In fact, the United States is one of the only developed nations without a National Manufacturing Strategy.

I hope to incorporate this legislation into the "Make it in America" initiative in the coming months.

By working together we can strengthen American manufacturing, American workers and the American dream.